

The Tooth That Fell

by JustTeahPlease

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Summary: ON HIATUS. Little five-year-old Shinichi is dragged to Scotland for a year of 'family vacation'... and gets lost in the woods. It's winter and it's not good, especially with rumors of a bear going around. Then they meet, and it's not a bear at all. HTTYD xover

1. Prologue

Finally, here it is: the Prologue of my Detective ConanxHow to Train Your Dragon story~!

**This is not one of those let's-wing-it-fics! **I worked on this story plot since forever, trying to make it realistic. It DID come as a crazy idea, but now it's much more than that :D Read a bit, and then decide if this is stupid or not :)

**Warnings:** child!fic, wannabe-serious!fic

>Words: 1317_

>Disclaimer for entire story: I don't own 'Detective Conan' nor 'How to Train Your Dragon'. They belong to Gosho Aoyama, Dreamworks and Cressida Cowell respectively._

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><p>Prologue: **_Only One Left_

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><p>The swipe of paw was lightning-quick and the fish flew through the air before it was even aware of its sudden relocation. Another flash of movement and it was nestled firmly between two sharp rows of teeth, not a chance of escape in sight.<p>

With an almost inaudible grunt, the creature holding it jumped up

from the small rock island it was perching on, continuing its way gracefully along other smaller and larger ones, straight and crooked, until it finally touched the shore of the main island. Its feet made crunching noises as they landed, the sound magnified tenfold by the absolute silence of the abandoned place.

Nothing lived there. Everything had run away when it could, and never came back.

Except for him.

He'd been staring out into the mist covered ocean every day, day by day. For so long.

The fish was still thrashing about helplessly when he cocked his head back, threw his prey into the air and swallowed it in two large bites.

Below him, the earth rumbled with a deep unsteady sound. Ear plates sprung into the air in an imitation of a listening dog, a nose whiffed knowingly and a finned tail swiped along the shore to splash into the water.

He stood there until the rumbles died down, tense and still like always, though this time it lasted much longer than usual. A sharp smell filled the air, so familiar from times past, but still very concerning from this distance. The water was also getting warmer day by day, as if foreboding a great disaster to come.

He didn't know why, but staying there was getting dangerous. Even the fish were getting scarce, feeling the changes of the sea.

Maybe it was time to leave.

Knowing that hunting for more fish would be useless lest he wanted to waste anymore time, he instead trusted his instincts and prowled along the shore, deeper into the island and along the steep side of the mountain that resided there. In a small crevice halfway up, he pulled out an old worn leather bag that made clinking noises when it was dragged along the earth. He climbed as far as he could without the smell getting too strong, and then looked out to the sea, bag dangling from his maw.

Once upon a time, you could barely see the sea at all. Now, the mist that had covered everything was receding, almost gone, and black smoke started to fill the air instead.

That decided it. It wasn't safe there anymore.

With a small grunt, long unused muscles flexed and a third pair of limbs stretched out on each of his sides. A small waft of air flew by and wings instinctually adjusted for the best way to take off, the habit inborn and unable to ever forget.

Behind him, a finned tail experimentally flapped against the earth, ready to be of use again. The lighter colored fin of the two still tingled from its long recovery.

Another ominous rumble resounded, this one shaking the earth so much that rocks detached from the mountain side and bits of lava started

spilling overtop. One rolled down and struck the place where moments before the strange black creature had stood.

Now, there was nothing there at all.

* * *

><p>For a long time he'd been the only one.<p>

He hadn't seen anyone of his brethren since the day he had returned to his former prison. Back then, before he'd left, the skies were still littered with them and humans still lived in harmony with them.

He wasn't sure what had changed, but maybe it was the nature of humans " because, dragons did have their pride and even if humans didn't realize it, they only allowed those they approved of to ride them. Moreover, even if they had one before didn't mean they'd allow just anyone to replace them easily after that. The same thing happened to him.

He'd had only one master, and anyone after that just wasn't worthy, for a few key reasons " because he wasn't a trophy for them to gloat about to others. Because he didn't want just a rider, but a partner, a friend. Because he wouldn't stand others disrespecting his wish and trying to 'tame' him again and again.

So he ran away, if not by air then by water. In the end he landed back where he started at his former prison, only now willingly. The irony.

Although, if he had to guess, he would say the rest of the dragons had simply discovered their freedom. After they'd been released from the Queen's reign, there was a whole world out there to explore, beyond cold Viking islands and tasteless prey. If he had to guess, they left because they could.

Only he stayed, shut away in his self-imposed prison, waiting and regenerating. And he had a feeling, somehow, that he was the only one left.

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><p>"Scotland? That's pretty far away."<p>

Around them, children and teens played games and sports, people congregating in groups based on different languages and interests. Down the beach, a woman reprimanded her errant children in distinct Portuguese. Next to her, a teen regarded her in curiosity before calling out to his friends in Swedish and taking off. A couple to their left talked sweet Hungarian nothings to each other.

There were loud calls and screams melting into a cacophony of happy noises. Men and women enjoyed the sunny day and, out on the open sea, a few surfers were even trying to catch some good waves to show off. It was a perfect summer day.

However, nothing of that touched their current conversation.

"I know, but the director is a good friend of mine and I owe him a

favor. We'd be setting off sometime in September." Yukiko added.

Yuusaku sighed, closing his eyes and leaning back on the beach chair he was sitting on. Today they had managed to snag one of the few good seats in the shade before any tourists could spot them.

"Yuu-chan?"

He slowly opened his eyes to regard his wife. "So, Scotland. How long would it take?" he asked tentatively. "You know Shinichi is almost five already, we'll have to return to Japan soon to enter him in grade school, or even before that so he can get used to being back home."

"I know," she replied, eyes averting to a small boy sitting in the shade of a palm tree some distance away.

He looked decidedly lonely, surrounded by a mass of tiny feet playing various games, yet not caring about the other children at all. He seemed intensely concentrated on building a nice-looking sand castle, a children's book in English momentarily forgotten by his side.

"I was told it won't take more than a year and I'm taking him on his word. I thought we could all go there, as a prolonged vacation, and your deadline is coming up soon, isn't it? It would be good for all of us."

"True, but the cold will be hard to get used to. I'm not sure he'll like it."

"Oh, don't worry about it," she flashed him a smile that just read 'I'm going to have so much fun'. "I'll be sure to take Shin-chan shopping for warmer clothes, he won't even feel it!" Here her smile diminished slightly. "But, I also think it will do him some good. There he'll be constantly surrounded by the movie staff who only speak English, so he'll have to adapt and learn to keep words from mixing up. He'll need it when we go back home."

Yuusaku 'hmm'-ed, watching his son glance at the children when one yelled something loudly in Hawaiian. He returned to his castle-building though, resolute not to get distracted again until he finished his masterpiece.

â€|Maybe a scene change would do him some good.

"I'll think about it."

Yukiko smiled. "That's all I ask."

* * *

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Just a few points to make:

>* I know squat about Scotland. I needed a country up north so I chose that one. Wiki only goes so far and a huge ass forest was needed, so I'm sorry if I ignore any fauna/flora/geography. I tried._

>* I worked hard to make this realistic. That's why Shinichi is just a kid, not spouting off about science and logic and other adult crap. He's fresh meat, so to speak. *sharp grin*

Okay, this is more like a teaser, so Chapter 1 comes in 2 days. After that, every 5 days is an update, until I finish or run out of pre-written chapters. I've got 7 done, writting 8th, will prolly be 13-15 in total (all planned out of course), so you're good for a month :)

Now, thoughts on Prologue:

>Hope everything is somewhat clear. About 'mixing up words', explanation in next chapter :)

I am excited and ashamed at the same time when posting this. Because 'yay, I'm posting it!' but 'ugh I'm posting without a beta' D: She went deaf on me. After a week no response T.T So anyone interested? I've got an offer before, but I'm not sure it still stands...

(Kyaa, a multi-chapter story after so long! I'm so excited! xD btw, the story won't go into the crossover archive until a few chapters pass (so I can get a bit of reader attention .))

2. Introductions

_I found a beta : 'D Great thanks to Serendipital, she found many faults with this chapter and corrected it. I feel loads better about posting now.

>And wheeee, I got 3 reviews for just the prologue! Glad my crazy idea is accepted!
Anyway, more A/N at the end. Read now, and enjoy!
>

**Warnings:** child!fic, wannabe-serious!fic
>Words: 2612__
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><p>Chapter 1: **_Introductions_

* * *

><p>His dreams of mouse detectives and rat criminals slowly began dissolving when a warm hand shook his shoulder lightly. He groaned, not wanting to let go before the bad guys were caught. Trying to go back to sleep proved fruitless, however, because the hand was damn persistent.<p>

"Shin-chan, look," was whispered in his ear.

He blearily opened his eyes, staring at his mother in question, but she just smiled and pointed a finger to the window of the airplane. The shades had been pulled away while he was sleeping and now dull light shone from outside. Still half-asleep, Shinichi did as his mother asked, stretching out to take a look.

The scene had changed drastically since the last time he'd checked

it. Instead of endless blue sea, now there was an expanse of green and grey. Mountains protruded not high enough for him to see them as such from his vantage point and light green color interspersed with dark as plains changed to forests.

"Isn't it nice? I bet we'll have a great time here."

Shinichi doubted it. The scene looked much colder, more desolate to him than Hawaii, with hardly any houses scattered about and roads lonely traveling across grassy fields. Even from high up here, the sun was almost over the horizon and darkness was starting to envelop everything, giving a cold impression. He doubted he'd have that much fun there.

Having done what his mother had asked of him, the five-year-old closed his eyes again in the hopes of continuing his previous dreams. Soon, he fell asleep.

Somehow, the mouse now chased the rat on a giant lizard.

* * *

><p>Shinichi sometimes hated it when he was right.<p>

The cold had been just as he'd expected it, or maybe even more " it chilled him to the bone. As soon as they left the warm inside of the airport and stepped into the frigid air, Shinichi couldn't help the shivers that ran throughout his body. He could guess part of it was because he had spent a good amount of time lounging at their warm retreat in Hawaii, but it still put him off. Wasn't it supposed to be a bit warmer in early September?

At one point his mother had noticed his shaking. Despite his many complaints, she took him in his arms and carried him the rest of the way out of the airport. Some time later he had quit demanding to be put down and just enjoyed the much warmer ride. His father had sent him knowing looks over the shoulder.

They met up with one of mum's old acquaintances, who gave them a long ride to a far off village and the hotel they'd be staying in. By the time they arrived, night had already fallen. It looked more like a big tavern than a hotel to him, but his father told him they only built it as such to make it feel more traditional. Shinichi thought he understood, but it didn't really matter to him as long as the inside was warm and cozy.

As he got out of the car, Shinichi noticed the building was positioned near a forest, maybe a five minute walk away from the actual village. This feeling of isolation too, his dad told him, was to make the place more attractive to tourists.

A gust of warm air greeted them upon entry and Shinichi had never been so glad for it in his life. From what he could see over his mother's shoulder, the ground floor was actually converted into a sort of pub, with crude wooden tables scattered over the place, stuffed animal heads hanging from the walls and a large fireplace crackling merrily in the back of the room. Villagers were mixing with foreigners, hunters exchanging stories, and somehow it seemed more like a popular meeting place at the village than just a resting place for tourists.

As soon as he was put down Shinichi set out to explore the room. His parents were led to a large table with an assortment of people, but none of them held Shinichi's interest. They'd be introducing themselves to each other for the next half an hour and he had no desire to be dragged around from person to person, watching them stare at the son of the famous mystery writer and actress rarely seen in public. He'd first leave them to cool down a bit, so possibly by the time he joined them he would be simply ignored.

He observed the stuffed animals with interest, but was ultimately drawn to the large fireplace at the back. It was the first time he'd seen a working one, those on TV excluded of course. He had a strong desire to poke at it with a metal pole lying nearby and watch the embers fly. He almost did it, but a feeling of being watched made him look around.

The barmaid was watching him knowingly, a platter of dinner orders in her hand. It was like she was daring him to try play with fire, yet at the same time telling him he better not even try or he would regret it.

The hand that had been reaching for the pole faltered. The barmaid's expression melted into an approving smile, but Shinichi scampered away with a flush on his face.

The woman was scary.

He joined the others at the table and was gratified to see his parents had left him a seat in-between them, so almost no one paid him a second glance. He didn't know why, but he didn't like people looking at him. They had a tendency to refer to him as cute and sweet and pinch his cheeks, thus drawing even more attention to the easily embarrassed child.

This was apparently the staff that would shoot the movie, or at least the part that stayed at this hotel and had time for an evening of jolly drinking. They had dinner all together, the atmosphere friendly and lax, with dishes ranging from wide-known to traditional. He tried a few of the later ones on his mother's insistence, but mostly stuck to the usual. Before they knew it the food was soon replaced by drinks and Shinichi's hands had acquired a book from his backpack.

There was a lot of useless adult talk so he had soon gotten bored with it. Occasionally there would be some interesting bits that caught his attention, but they were few and far between.

So far the boy had caught some mention of a scene a drunkard had made earlier, of the cold weather that would get even colder (_great, just great_), some barren island that was recently discovered because smoke from its volcano had been creating a concealing mirage, and some craters in the woods that were the village children's doing.

He'd been falling half-asleep by the time another interesting topic rolled around.

"You sure? Then is it wise to shoot here?"

"Nah, it's just gossip, _gossip_ people," the man questioned said in a joking tone. "There can't really be a bear here, hasn't been since forever. And if there were, they say it's deep in the woods up north, and we're only going to film on the edge of it. Nothing to worry about."

"Still," One of the actors seemed uncertain. "A bear, in these parts? I thought they were long extinct. Maybe it was a wolf or something?"

The man jumped almost a foot high when a firm hand landed on his shoulder. He looked up into the steady gaze of the barmaid Shinichi had seen earlier. The small boy sunk in his chair, trying not to be seen. The barmaid spoke.

"Aye, but there ain't nae wolves here fer more than two cent'ries."

The joking man from before suddenly didn't seem so prone to jokes anymore. He straightened and tried to look more serious (and sober) than before. He didn't succeed much.

"Edel, what brings you here?"

'Edel' was a portly woman in her forties, with pulled-up dark brown hair and a face that was definitely warm, unless she was looking at someone with a stern look that anyone having experience with drunkards and troublesome customers had perfected over time. Come to think of it, she was leveling that look right then at the leader of their small party. Shinichi had also been an unfortunate victim during his inspection of the room earlier.

Her voice had a thick accent that took Shinichi additional time to properly decipher, and she was still wearing a pitcher of some drink in her hand that she must have been delivering.

"Don't yeh 'Edel' me, Mr. Director!" she replied in an angry voice, but the amused glint in her eyes was unmistakable. Shinichi was sure that wasn't the man's real name, but the small child didn't really care about it at the moment. "Yer talk about bears' makin' my guests believe there's actually one out there!"

"Too true." Yuusaku quietly added from Shinichi's right.

They looked around. Even if it seemed like no one was listening, there were a bit _too_ many heads suspiciously refusing to look in their direction.

"Well, what is it then?" A staff member asked.

The barmaid puffed out a gust of air. "Prob'ly some fox or other. It's just a bunch o' rumours," Almost absent-mindedly she re-filled the glass of a nearby man whose cheeks were getting rosier by the minute. "Truth is they found some upturned earth in th' forest some time ago, an' after that a fawn turned up half-eaten. But tha' was months ago, an' nothing happened since." She waved a hand nonchalantly. "They even set up some bear traps, just ta be sure, but still nothin'. If yeh ask me, some hungry foxes just got lucky on a sick fawn, and th' earth was some prank played by the children 'round here. They'd done it before."

The occupants of the table all nodded their heads in silent agreement, accepting the most likely explanation. Shinichi even saw some of the other guests appearing more relieved, their shoulders slumping a fraction more than before. In his opinion, they couldn't have been more obvious if they tried.

"But what's this?" She changed the topic abruptly, catching sight of Shinichi lounging half-asleep in his chair. "I wanted to ask yeh this since yer came in, but it was a busy night. Care to tell me who this cute little fella is? We haven't had children so young over in quite awhile, mostly it's jus' hunters and some couples wantin' to be alone."

Shinichi suddenly felt as if there were all too many heads turned his way. He couldn't help the blush creeping up his face. Damn, and he'd done such a good job at staying undetected. He shouldn't have gone to examine that fireplace, he just knew it. Damn his curiosity.

His mother, however, seemed to glow under all the attention. Before he could even blink, she grabbed him around the waist and placed him snugly in her lap. Shinichi would have protested, but he was too embarrassed by the many stares. Why did they have to look at him so intently?

"Oh, this is Shinichi, our son," she gestured to herself and the aforementioned son's dad. "I'm Yukiko by the way, and this is Yuusaku."

Edel nodded. "Ah, I heard about yeh. Hope yeh have a nice stay, since yer brought yer family with yeh an' all. How old is he?"

"Thank you, I'm sure we will," she smiled. "And he's- Well Shinichi, why don't you introduce yourself and answer the lady's question?"

The situation couldn't get any worse for the boy. His face was on fire and everyone was still looking at him. He was sure this was another one of his mother's schemes to make him 'come out of his shell' and 'shine under all the attention' as he was supposed to. This would actually be the first time he spoke to the others this evening. Usually he'd just try to stay invisible.

With an internal sigh, he looked up from his lap to meet the lady's eye "or rather the pitcher, since he was too shy for direct eye contact..

"Umm, hullo. My name is Shinichi, andâ€| _ettoâ€| gosai desu._"

His cheeks burned even more at the blank looks he received. Had he said something wrong?

A hand was tussling his hair into a right mess before he even had time to protest. Yukiko laughed apologetically at the others while at the same time deflecting Shinichi's hand that wanted to save his cowlick. "You'll have to excuse him, Shin-chan's been having some troubles separating English from Japanese," she explained and removed the small hand grabbing for her chin. "You see, we've been living in America for a long time but spoke Japanese only between us, so it's all gotten a bit mixed up. Anyway, I think you wanted to say you're

five years old, Shin-chan," she admonished.

"Ah, _hai_." He agreed, then caught himself at the look in her eyes. "I mean, _yes_."

"So he's bilingual," Edel nodded her head in understanding. "But I think it's more cute than anythin' tha' he mixes up words."

The look in her eyes was strangely similar to the one his mother would give him when he did something '_kawaii_', after which she would proceed to hug him and take pictures. It made him decidedly uncomfortable, even more uncomfortable than when she'd sent him a stern look earlier. This was starting to enter dangerous territory.

"He'll be stayin' with yeh th' whole time?" the barmaid inquired, indicating both Yukiko and Yuusaku.

"Yes, we thought we'd make this a vacation. And either way, my husband doesn't have anything better to do."

Those who had heard of Yuusaku's occupation and trouble with editors laughed heartily. The conversation steadily moved away from the topic of Shinichi, and he thanked _kami_ for that. Although now that he was high up in his mother's lap and in direct view, he got the occasional curious glance or two.

He decided he'd spent enough time being the center of attention for the evening. While she was still holding him securely in her lap, Shinichi tugged on his mother's sleeve. When she broke off her conversation with another woman, he turned to her. "_Kaasan_, I'm tired."

Having seen the display, Shinichi caught the barmaid hugging the pitcher she was carrying to her chest, as if she was trying not to do the same with the uncomfortable boy. It was really becoming high-time for a tactical retreat.

His mother glanced at the clock, blinked at the late hour and thankfully began to excuse herself so she could ready him for bed. By the time he was whisked off to their room, inspected it briefly, washed and was tucked in bed, Shinichi was feeling the exhaustion of the long day, as well as the flight, and fell asleep without much fuss.

In a few days the shooting would start, and somehow he had a feeling it would be a hard few months for him.

Sometimes he hated it when he was right.

* * *

><p>In the dead of the night, no one noticed a dark body soaring through the equally dark sky. It stretched out, making loops and dangerous dives in the still air, and never did it feel so free.<p>

It went as far as to the shore of the mainland, swooped down and caught a fish in its maw. It repeated the process several times before it was satisfied enough to rise to the sky once more.

In its opinion, fish was so much better than any other land animal.

* * *

><p>-0-0-0-0-0-

_I'm adding another point: in addition to taking this seriously and knowing nothing about Scotland, I also know next to nothing about making a movie. Dunno how long it takes, how many people are required, and frankly I think I'd better do without despairing when pointed out I'm doing it wrong. It'll be just on the sidelines as a plot-device, so bear with me please :)>

So, chapter 1 is here! Before any real plot begins I had to do some pesky introductions. None of the people really matter, but Edel will pop up here or there to help out in babysitting Shinichi :D You get to see what I meant about mixing words in the prologue (isn't he just the cutest thing?) and we hear some rather interesting rumors flying around. Oh and is that last sentence a confirmation of those rumors? *big grin*

_POV: The story is mainly in Shinichi's POV, but later on I've gotten tired of dumbing the text down so you'll see some words a 5-year-old shouldn't know. It's gonna be weird, but I'm not looking for perfection. That's why Shinichi sort of curses ('Damn his curiosity').>

Mixing words up: My beta asked me why Shinichi is confused people don't understand him, instead of being embarrassed he doesn't know the words. In short, Shinichi is a shy kid, also very young, and had his parents do most of the talking to strangers. When he talked with Yuusaku, he tended to ignore his slip-ups, and Yukiko thought it was cute until it was too late to realize Shinichi adopted his manner of speech as 'normal'. She's trying to get him out of the habit, but it takes time, and it's not exactly as if Shinichi was forced to adapt or realize it needed to change. Until now.

Hawaiian: No, Shinichi didn't learn that language cuz he was mostly indoors, shied away from strangers and wasn't at Hawaii all the time. His parents traveled across the world, primarily America and Japan, so he had no opportunity for that.

_I think that's all the matters I needed to clear up. Please tell me what you think and if you don't understand, ask questions so I can add explanations for everyone in next chapter. And again, please review! :D>

_Next Chapter: Out of Sight>

3. Out of Sight

Thanks for reviewing people, thanks so much :D

_Whew, a day late but I got it up. Sorry, my beta and I kinda bypassed each other cuz of the time difference, and she was hurrying as it is cuz life got in the way. That's right people, she has a LIFE o_O_>Anyway, finally we've laid the basics down and can begin with the plot; the chapter title should be enough of a clue. Not much else to say. Now read!

**Warnings:** child!fic, wannabe-serious!fic>Words: 2319__>

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><p>Chapter 2: **_Out of Sight_

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><p>The next few months indeed weren't light on Shinichi. After a certain amount of time had passed, a sort of routine was set up.<p>

In the mornings his mother would either be gone or be ready to go to 'work', depending on what scenes they were filming that day. During her absence, dad and he wouldn't really know what to do with themselves, so they'd either go out to waste time, watch TV, or stay inside reading books.

His father always took a bunch of books with him wherever he went, but recently only allowed Shinichi to read the ones in Japanese. He said he'll have to get used to it either way since he'll be attending grade-school soon. Shinichi didn't really like it, as there wasn't a great choice that was only in kana, but complied anyway.

More often than not he found himself helping Miss Edel with some manual work at the tavern/hotel, just so he had something to do. Fetching glasses from tables, wiping the counter clean, even carrying firewood was preferred to total boredom. She never forced him, but seemed to take pity on him. She even let him poke the fire with the stick a few times, or got the hunters to tell him a few good stories.

She tried to steer him into playing with the village children a few times, but Shinichi just wasn't interested in the group a few years older than him, nor were they in a kid that didn't know their language. He was better used to being on his own.

It was also a right learning experience to be surrounded by people that only spoke English, if they even spoke it. When he had to inquire about his parent's whereabouts or ask Miss Edel this or that, he had to be careful not to mix languages. When he'd been at Hawaii, there was only him and his parents, so even if he spoke incorrectly they would understand his multi-language speech. Here in Scotland, it wasn't just a mix-up, it was downright gibberish to people around him, so he finally concluded that _yes_, his parents may have been right to say that he needed to work on it.

Fortunately, it became easier as September rolled into October and October into November. He was even beginning to innately understand Miss Edel's thick accent without having to spend extra brain activity

deciphering it. It also became a habit for everyone to call him 'Shin', partly because his name was a mouthful and partly because his mother insisted on it.

However, as time dragged by, Yukiko began to notice the horrible monotony of her family's day-life. Horrified at their bored schedule of mainly reading and lounging around, she took it upon herself to bring some fresh air into it.

Only, she took it a bit too literally.

* * *

><p>Currently Shinichi was shivering by the small heater the movie staff had brought to the day's filming scene.<p>

It was nice " in his opinion " it was _really_ nice of his mother to take him with her to enjoy the landscape while she was busy working, and it was certainly a great experience to see her acting like a whole other person while in front of the camera, but he thought it would have been even nicer if it wasn't so _cold_.

After a couple of months spent in Scotland, Shinichi was slowly getting used to the dreary weather, but only just so. The temperatures seemed to drop from day to day, leaving him sometimes wondering if he'll return to the hotel as an ice cube. He envied his father for being able to stay back in their cozy room; he knew mom let him only because he had to work on a novel and his deadline was approaching, but the boy also knew his father was most likely drinking coffee and enjoying the newspaper instead.

Shinichi, however, couldn't be excused with reading books or watching TV all day, so his mom took him to spend it with her. Out in the open. In the cold.

The place they were filming at today was a long way off from the village, high up north. It was actually the first time they were filming in a forest area, and it looked like they would spend some time there too. From what he could understand, it was actually quite large, spanning over halfway up to a high mountain and twice that much in the valley beneath. There was even a river or two running through it, but Shinichi was told it was deep inside and hard to see. He had to wager it was because of the thick and high evergreen and deciduous tree branches obscuring anything from view.

Currently they were situated at the upper eastern edge of the forest, meaning a lovely bone-chilling breeze was always sweeping through. If he found a nice perch with a lookout unobstructed by trees, he could have a very nice view of the vast land below them.

At the moment though, he would much rather have a nice warm bath.

With a sigh of boredom, Shinichi sadly detached himself from the warm heater. It didn't bring him as much heat as before, since it had begun to malfunction some days ago because of its overuse. Shinichi could hardly begrudge it for that; it should have been expected in this cold. He felt like he might as well go explore his surroundings instead of clinging to a steel cube, which may or may not spontaneously emit bursts of cool warmth.

He tried to convey his intentions to a nearby cameraman, but he must've said something wrong again because he received a blank look. He pointed to the forest and the man must have understood, as he told him not to go too far. He corrected Shinichi's speech (the staff had been instructed to do so by his mother) and dismissed him.

He bypassed the large area full with cameras and other equipment, careful not to step in front of any of them in case they were turned on, and took off for the large congregation of mixed trees.

As soon as he entered the woods, he found himself admiring the way everything darkened as tree branches blocked the sun's rays. Everything suddenly became much more secluded and secretive, the thick tree barks and looming tops only adding to it. There were rustling sounds all around, small animals scattering across the dry leaves that had fallen from some of the deciduous trees in the area. In the distance, the sound of a branch breaking and falling was reverberating.

To some it would appear a lonely place. To others, it would bring a faint queasiness to their person, a sense of being alone and vulnerable in an unfamiliar place. The voices of the movie staff were far away and echoing, melting into an incomprehensible mix of sounds. It could seem like a scary place, to some.

To a child like Shinichi, it was perfect.

* * *

><p>He held his breath when a crunch was heard, willing his heart to calm down so he wouldn't have to take in large gulps of air. His body was bent at the waist behind a fallen tree bark, ready to spring at any moment. He fought the instinct to lift his head and look at the source of the sound, knowing he'd be seen.<p>

He waited.

Another crunch and he sprang forth from his hiding place, running for the nearest tree and almost stumbling on some roots along the way. However, he managed to regain his balance and make it there within a few precious seconds. He pressed his back against the bark and fell still once more.

He waited for his opponent to make the next move, to reveal his position so he could get that much nearer to him. He mustn't get detected though, no he mustn't. It would mean the end of this game of cat and mouse.

To Shinichi's right something small fell to the ground, but he would pretend it was the foot of a criminal stepping on a twig. He shot from behind his hiding place, narrowly escaping the point blank range the imagined criminal had him at. His legs burned as he sought out another place to hide, but they were all too far away.

Well, in such situationsâ€¦|

He imagined the criminal silently cursing as he fell over the same root Shinichi had managed to avoid earlier and that gave him just enough time to reach another tree to. Puffs of air left his mouth at

a rapid pace and his winter clothes were entirely too warm for this kind of activityâ€ but a wide smile tugged at his lips all the same.

Some would consider Shinichi a rather frail child. He mostly stayed indoors, read books or did boring things, avoided talking to as many people as he could and never seemed to venture out to play with any other kids. They would say that made him rather weak in his physique and exhausted in any physical activity he would be subjected to.

They would be wrong.

Yes, Shinichi liked reading, and yes, it may seem as if he never did any sports, but that was only because he wasn't in the mood at the time. His mother often said he needed exercise each day so he could keep it moderate, but Shinichi rather liked how he could go out one day, get started on a game and go without stopping for several hours, lost in his fantasies of criminals and detectives who chased them.

It was his favorite game, and best adapted to playing with only himself, as no one could keep up with him for a whole day nor get into it near as intensely. He'd played it a few times with some other kids that were willing, but they gave up too soon because it was getting boring and exhausted them too much. And he had to admit, it wasn't that much fun to him either. They were too loud in their escape, too obvious in their hiding.

So he imagined someone else was there with him, a silent criminal hard to detect, difficult to see approach, and impossible to catch unaware. It dampened his mood a little that he was imagined, but he'd gotten used to it with time. He just tried not thinking about it.

He was about to duck under a branch and make a dash for another tree, intent on surprising his adversary by coming up behind his back (even though it was impossible as he wasn't even rea- don't think about it!), when he heard a shout in the distance.

"Shiiin-ichi!"

The boy started as at the mention of his name. Abruptly the whole scene changed, the imagined shapes of criminals vanished and the tense silence of two opponents waiting for the other to slip disappeared. The next rustle he heard was that of the wind playing a prank on him, not of people prowling around.

The game was over.

His name was repeated again, barely heard, and suddenly the boy realized just how much distance he'd covered since he ventured into the forest. He didn't recognize any of his surroundings anymore and couldn't remember where he'd even come from. He had been so immersed in the game that he had forgotten to follow the cameraman's instructions and not go too far. Even the tree branches seemed to have become thicker, making the forest much darker than it formerly was.

Since he'd entered the forest from a higher point, he must've just

done what was easiest and run downhill during his imagined chase. It would mean that he now had to climb up there to meet up with the others.

It would be an exhausting trek.

Although, in his opinion it was worth it; he'd had so much fun!

"Shinichiiiiii!"

"Coming!" he called, hoping they would hear him.

He probably should have gotten a bit intimidated by his unknown surroundings, a bit afraid of not seeing any light that indicated the edge of the forest, but he was still somewhat exhilarated from the game, so he just followed the direction his mother's voice came from. He'd get out of there eventually.

A faint noise in the distance caught his attention. Narrowing his eyes, he turned his head to listen. It sounded like splashing and gurgling, though a bit more powerful than that. Was a river near here?

He wished he could go investigate, just catch a glimpse of it now that he knew it was there, but it was not fated to be as he heard another call of his mother, this one much more warning.

He thought about it for a moment, then shrugged and started retreating uphill to the general direction of his mother's voice. It would have to wait, and it also seemed as if it was still a good distance away. He could see no water from his spot, after all.

He'd come back to investigate another day.

He liked that word, 'investigate'. It made it seem as if he was going to do an important task, a case worthy of writing a book about. Yes, the case of finding the elusive river. He'd get to it as soon as he could.

Suddenly he was a whole lot more enthusiastic about this task than he'd been a moment ago. He could hardly wait.

Had the boy walked just a tad more in the direction of the mysterious river, he would have (probably) noticed an old wooden sign, fallen over and half buried under dry leaves, proclaiming a cliff coming up. Had he walked just a bit more after that, he might have wondered how he never noticed the large river spanning just below that inconspicuous cliff.

He might have even accidentally fallen off, but who knows?

* * *

><p>-0-0-0-0-0-_

_Shinichi reading: I know that most kids don't know how to read at age five, I know that. Especially Japanese. It's not as if the kid reads anything complicated. Children's books mostly, maybe picture books in Japanese cuz he barely understands anything. He just says

his father carries it around him cuz, well, Yuusaku is like the holy carrier of all books out there, including kiddie ones in Shinichi's eyes. *shrugs*
>

mwahaha, you thought it was gonna happen, right? Right? Hehe, oh I love the ending. I love it to death. I'm sure you do too :'D Next chapter 5 days from now~!

Teeeeeease~! ;D
>
_

4. The River

_Late again, this time due to schoolwork. Some things will have to change. More info on that in bottom A/N.
>For now though, read! It finally happens~!
Chapter title says it all.
>

**Warnings:** child!fic, wannabe-serious!fic
>Words: 2859__
>

* * *

><p>Chapter 3: **_The River
>

* * *

><p>Unfortunately, the return to the forest had to be postponed.<p>

The next day Shinichi awoke to a world filled with heavy rain and strong wind. There was even snow occasionally, but it quickly melted under the onslaught of falling water. Mud was everywhere, sometimes hiding in puddles of water and sometimes just waiting for someone to step in it as they exited the hotel.

Shinichi tried to follow his mother to work again in the hopes of getting started on his 'case', but it turned out that the staff had hastily changed locations because they had been waiting to film in this kind of weather. Therefore, he spent a full day out in the rain, his only company being the visible puffs of air leaving his mouth and the half-warm portable heater at his side.

It was no surprise, then, that he'd gotten a nasty cold. The same night he had sneezed himself to sleep and by the next afternoon he'd gone through too many tissues to count.

There was a small silver lining in the disaster however â€" at least now he could stay at the warm hotel and relax the whole day, like he'd originally wanted. It would figure that just as he'd found something to do, he was dragged back indoors.

He endured the treatment though, endured the warmth of his bed and endured the mollycoddling of his mother and Miss Edel like a seasoned fighter. He still wanted to find that river; everything else somehow

lost its appeal in comparison. He wanted to see his first big case solved. He was determined to see it through.

Shinichi wouldn't know it, but that would be the early beginnings of his 'detective sense' rearing its end; that pesky feeling that would want to see a case solved and more to come up, even if it meant canceling future dates and leaving best friends standing alone in amusement parks.

Oh well.

One morning, while his mother was feeding him medicine, she casually announced they were going back to that forest area to continue filming. Shinichi pounced at the chance.

"You sure you want to come with us, Shin-chan? We're going to be out until late in the evening, and it'll be pretty cold. You still haven't stopped sneezing."

"_Ii dayo_, _Kaasan_. Said the fever's gone down, _ne_? I feel much better than yesterday too!"

His mother didn't look very convinced.

"And 's really boring _koko ni_, got nothing to do but read books and _Tousan_ just slacks offâ€¦" He came up with a few other complaints about how boring it was staying indoors, and soon mom looked much more eager to take him out than let him stay to rot away with books.

She also looked a tad irritated when he mentioned dad, but sacrifices had to be made. He'd just have to scamper out of sight when the confrontation between his parents came.

Before they left though, his mother went out of her way to bundle him up in heavy winter clothes, so that he now sported a fluffy scarf and beanie, as well as a warm jacket and thick winter gloves. He had to urge the staff to hurry up because he was cooking in the hotel while waiting for them.

Once outside it became obvious that the mud had not dried over, but luckily his boots prevented his feet from getting soaked. The heavy rain had also subsided to a light drizzle, which was slowly being turned to snow as time wore on.

When they arrived, it was much colder than last time and already late into the afternoon, but Shinichi couldn't be bothered by that.

He was a detective on a mission.

Like last time, he told a cameraman he'd go play in the forest (he didn't correct him this time, he must've said it right!), and just like last time, he got a warning not to go too far. He nodded, mentally crossing his fingers.

He'd have to hurry up with his case, before they went calling for him. He'd gotten a right scolding last time from his mother. Maybe he would have even been dissuaded from ever going back in thereâ€¦ if it only weren't for his self-appointed task.

It was a bit hard to run fast in his thick winter clothes and soon he was sweating in earnest. Cold air assaulted his face, but it brought only relief to him. Feeling hot, he took off his beanie and held it in his hand as he carefully made his way downhill. Unlike last time, the ground was much more slippery from the rain and he had to be careful not to fall on his backside.

He didn't know how much time had passed before he came to the same point as last time, but he did know that he had fallen twice (mom was going to be so angry at his dirty clothes), had a muddy slide down the hill once (so angry) and gotten scratched by an ill-placed branch more times than he could count.

The light in the woods had also gotten weaker, maybe even more than last time. Was it already getting dark?

However, none of that really mattered to him. In the distance, just like the previous time, he could hear a faint splashing and gurgling sound. The river! Now he just had to walk in that direction, but still hurry up before it got too late.

Once during his journey, a movement in the nearby bushes caught his attention. He stilled, as did the creature some distance away.

It was a tabby cat. It regarded him for a few quiet moments, body tense, then darted off out of sight. Shinichi wondered what a cat was doing in a forest (was that one of those wildcats that lived there?), but then shrugged it off. Back to the task at hand.

He carefully headed downhill, mindful of the slippery ground and the branches when he used tree barks to stop his descending momentum. He did this a few more times, bouncing from tree to tree, a bit more apprehensive with each step and the increased steepness. How would he go back, climbing all the way up there without totally ruining his clothes?

He groaned. His mother was going to kill him.

In his single-mindedness, he never noticed a buried warning sign left forgotten at the top of the slope.

Suddenly he slipped on a wet root and lost his footing behind the tree. With a yell he tried to grab a nearby branch, but it cracked under his weight and joined him on his muddy trip downhill. At this rate he'll never stop!

He let go of whatever he was holding and tried to grab for the squishy floor beneath him, but it slowed his journey only so much. When he caught sight of a well-sized stump on his downward path, Shinichi did his best to stretch out in its direction and grab for it. Briefly he worried that his hands would be too muddy to take proper hold, but thankfully that wasn't the case.

With a strong jerk his descent was broken, causing the large stump to lean heavily on one side. It was only half-lodged into the earth, with most of the roots jutting out, but it held.

He stopped.

He took a few large breaths trying to control his heart-rate. He took

a few more before he finally deemed himself ready to move his legs and stand back up. A painful throb in his ribs and front side had him wincing, tears in eyes, knowing he must've been knocked into a few pointy things on his way down, not to mention the strong impact with the stump. There would be bruises tomorrow.

He didn't even dare contemplate what his mother would say about his appearance. He was sure it looked like he had dyed all his clothes muddy brown (Soo, _so_ angry she will be).

A few deep, calming breaths later, he slowly pushed himself up. His hands hurt (his fingers especially so) from scratching at the ground and the stump. He was still holding onto it with a death grip and, truthfully, he couldn't bring himself to care about the fact. He had the right to be shaky after such a frightful experience.

Once his head cleared enough for him to become aware of his surroundings, he was surprised to hear that the sound of water had gotten much louder than before. Now there was a strong and partially deafening 'shh' sound accompanying the splashes and gurgles from before. He wondered why.

A sudden idea struck him. Now that he was so close to the river, maybe he could clean himself up! Of course he could do nothing for his soaked clothes, but washing his dirty face would suffice. Not to mention that soaking his wounds seemed like a good idea at the moment.

Slowly, he looked up from his curled up position at the stump, searching for the water that should be flowing nearby. There wasn't one though.

He furrowed his eyebrows. Where was the river?

Despite many protests from his body, a very roughed-up Shinichi tried to move slowly in the direction of the illusive river (there was no point trying to salvage clothes now, might as well ruin them the right way). He held tightly onto the bark with one hand, slowly rising to his feet and trying to peer into the distance.

Before him, the ground opened up to reveal he was standing on a cliff. What met his eyes made him gulp in frightful realization.

Sound suddenly exploded. A gust of strong wind assaulted his face. His gasp went almost unheard.

There was the river. Oh yes, the river was there _alright._

It was large, much larger than Shinichi would have ever anticipated. He'd imagined a small trail of water going to the forest, eluding people's sight and hiding like a grand mystery waiting to be found out. He'd imagined it flowing merrily but slowly downhill and he'd imagined himself, in his triumph of finding it, sitting at its banks and taking a cold refreshing sip for the journey back.

He highly doubted he would be taking a sip from _this_.

It was large; _really_ large, Shinichi realized. So large that the large stump he was holding onto could fall in and still be

effortlessly carried away. And it was fast. Water sprayed as it beat against the rocks in its path, creating foam and not leaving much to the imagination to the fate of anything (or anyone) caught up in there.

As for Shinichi's triumphant sip, it was unlikely he'd ever even get to the banks. The river was way down, beneath the cliff Shinichi was perched on. It was too steep for him to even think of going down there. He'd fall off in an instant.

Shinichi's knees buckled at the implication. A frightened whimper left his mouth, but he couldn't will his legs to move. They were as frozen as his head was, refusing to turn away from the deadly view.

He was standing near the very edge, just at the place where grass and leaves gave way to a small portion of ground covered with rocks, before they cut off abruptly in a near vertical angle. A wet leaf that had found itself down there due to his intervention got blown off in the strong wind

When a small pebble near his foot detached and slipped off the edge, the loud echoey sound it made as it rolled down and splashed was enough to shake him out of his petrified state.

With trembling legs he started to retreat, ducking his head to the ground for good measure so he wouldn't have to see over the cliff anymore. As soon as the river vanished from view and the sounds dimmed a little, he let out a great sigh of relief.

He had to get out of there— get out of there and then start panicking about what just almost happened.

'_That's right, think of it as a game,'_ he told himself without much conviction. '_I just imagined that whole thing, and I need to get back NOW.'_

It was hard though, making himself believe it was just his imagination. He doubted he'd ever get that picture out of his head, the wind on his face, the ominous sound-

His foot slipped on the ground and with a yell he desperately (with much more desperation than before) grabbed at the ground, slowing to a stop. His heart was hammering against his ribcage again, but he willed himself to calm down.

Alright, so the hill was steep and alright, it would be a long trek back up and alright, it was getting so dark he could barely see, but that didn't mean he couldn't make it. He just (he tested his footing) had to go (tested his other foot and took) one step at a time.

He repeated this process several times before he was far enough from the cliff to relax. He hadn't even realized how much everything hurt until right then. The pain had been forgotten during his shock. He stopped for a moment in his ascent, leaning back on an old tree bark and panting loudly.

It was really dark now. He coughed when the scratchy feeling in his throat became too much.

Shinichi contemplated crying for help, but decided against it. In his five-year-old mind, getting caught muddy near a dangerous cliff was much worse than being caught muddy higher up. It would mean he'd just run off again, after all, not gotten himself into any dangerous situation because he didn't listen to his mother's scolding the last time.

He hoped he'd get back before they started calling for him.

When something lightly fell from above, he blinked in wonder. It was a snowflake. It was snowing.

Something suddenly flashed in the inky darkness above him. Shinichi jolted, much more wary of the forest than the last time he'd been there. Now he knew there were dangers in there, and now he knew this place shouldn't have been entered recklessly. What else could be hidden in its depths?

The flash moved, causing the boy to flinch. He only had enough time to realize it was just the glowing eyes of a cat watching him when his footing gave out, causing him to lean heavily on the rotten tree behind him. It barely gave an ominous _crack_ before his hands went flying for empty air and his back hit the steep ground.

This time, he didn't just slide down. He rolled backwards once and his head throbbed painfully when it came into contact with the ground. He rolled onto his side, trying to protect his head, but it didn't stop his descent.

This time, when he reached for the stump, it gave out and lodged itself out of the earth. It joined him on the way down, but stopped at the edge of the cliff.

Shinichi, however, didn't stop.

He screamed, he tried to hold onto the pointy rocks as he passed them on the way down, but all that it brought was a voice broken from the cold, scratched fingers and the cold _cold_ sensation of water engulfing him from all sides.

* * *

><p>The cameraman was just taking a small break with coffee in hand, when a female voice shook him out of his reverie.<p>

"Excuse me, do you know where Shin-chan went?"

Shin-chan, or Shin â€" the boy the staff had grown fond of soon after they first met him. How could they not, when they were responsible for correcting his speech (per the young actress' request) and enjoying his quiet company when he occasionally tagged along to the filming scenes? They all found him either cute (mostly females) or just plain amusing.

"Yeah, he went into the forest some time ago. Told him not to go too far, but seems he didn't listen again," he smiled apologetically.

Yukiko peered towards the line of trees, but couldn't find her son.

She sighed. "That boy, always going out on his own. Just like his father on a case."

"Do you want me to go look for him?" the man asked. He felt a bit guilty he hadn't paid attention to the actress' son, even if he'd been preoccupied by work.

She hummed, then shook her head with a smile. "No, let him be. I'm sure he's enjoying himself right now. I'll call him back when it starts to get dark."

Then the break was over and everyone went back to work.

* * *

><p>"Shinichi! Shinichi!"

"I found something!"

"What? Where?" She screamed. "Did you find him?"

The man hesitated, then shook his head. He beckoned her over, pointing his flashlight at something below. "Look."

She peered down, then paled. There was a beanie, muddy and half buried under the leaves. She knew whom it belonged to.

"And look," the man continued, reluctantly pointing to something at his side.

It was a wooden sign.

"No," Yukiko whispered. "No, that can't- no. No! Shinichi! _SHINICHI!!!_"

But there was no answer.

* * *

><p>-0-0-0-0-0-

Okay, for this cliffhanger I will not laugh. Why? Cuz it only gets worse.

You see, in the beginning there were supposed to be two chapters: 'Lost' and 'Encounter', but then it got out of hand and I had to cut it up. So you can expect that from now on until several chapters forth, there will be some form of cliffhanger or other. Uhh, I'm sorry?

_Also, I can't post every 5 days anymore so I'm upgrading to weekly. Me and my beta got school, and since mine is college and I'm learning languages, every lesson is important and I can't afford to miss it due to being tired. Sooo, updates will instead come every Sunday.

_

And that's all! *hides behind bullet-proof desk with beta who is already wearing a Kevlar vest*

Other than that, review! Please review! *pitiful eyes*

5. Lost

_I don't think I have much to say cuz I'm real tired and pissed cuz it's 4am now and I couldn't have done this sooner -.-

>Anyway, read!
_

**Warnings:** child!fic, wannabe-serious!fic, angst

>Words: 2545__

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><p>Chapter 4: **_Lost

>

* * *

><p>He wasn't aware of much, beside the cold.<p>

It was overwhelming. From all sides, encompassing him, rendering him immobile. He was floating, floating in the never-ending cold.

His throat itched; it itched and ached so much he couldn't even bring himself to cough because he learned it would only hurt more. His whole body tingled, his hands and knees throbbed. His head hurt, and his vision swam before his eyes.

He couldn't decide which side of him was colder. One trembled under the onslaught of flowing ice, always anew and never warming him over in its freezing gentle waves. He could barely feel that side. The other was shivering in the breeze, almost burning him with its chill.

He was lying facedown on something hard. It poked at him from all sides, a constant throb against the ones already existing. He thought they were rocks. It hurt. His _head_ hurt. He was cold.

Tears welled up in his eyes and spilt over. It only made the cold even more pronounced as it briefly warmed trails sideways over his face.

The sound of gurgling surrounded him, but otherwise it was completely still. It scared him.

Where was he? Where were his parents? Why couldn't he get up?

Why did it hurt so much?

He wanted to ask all those questions, but nothing came out of his mouth. The only thing he managed to produce was a 'hah' and a gasp. He'd tried calling for help, but nothing worked. No voice came out.

He was alone.

He wanted his mom. She wouldn't let him lie freezing here. She would take him in her arms (and this time he wouldn't protest), and she

would make him feel safe (and he wouldn't get embarrassed), and she'd make all the pain go away. And he'd hug her back, because she was there.

But she wasn't.

He tried to clench the hand in front of his face into a fist " he couldn't bear to look at the scratched skin of his fingers anymore, peeking through torn winter gloves. He was half-surprised when it did move. He didn't feel it at all.

A bit hopeful at the successful movement, he tried to raise his body from the cold water caressing his body. It took time, excruciating time, but soon he was kneeling in the water instead of lying facedown. He almost fell back as a wave of nausea came over him, but he caught himself roughly with his hands, now half-glad he could only feel the pain faintly.

It was dark. He could hardly see anything, even with the moonlight overhead. His vision swam with each small movement of his head and in the back of his mind it briefly registered that this was something to be concerned about.

He couldn't bring himself to care. He just wanted to go home.

Using a nearby rock as support, he tried heaving himself up to his feet. His knees buckled three times before he managed to hold himself up. With a great deal of effort (and trying to ignore the pain and trembling in his scratched knees), he started moving to the side of the wide-spread stream that looked shallower than his current position.

Soaked freezing boots made splashing sounds as they treaded through water, occasionally followed by a louder one as he lost his footing and fell over. By now the stream was so shallow he appeared to walk a rocky ground covered with only a thin translucent layer that represented water. The moonlight reflecting off the surface added a very mesmerizing sight to it, like threads interwoven into a brilliant web of light. The only disturbances to the phenomenon were the faint waves of the river and violent ridges made from his steps.

At this moment though, he couldn't care less " he hated water. He wanted to get away from it at all costs, feel dry ground under him and stay there. He couldn't remember how much of it he'd coughed up since his body had started scraping ground again, even as the tide insisted on carrying him further downstream. Couldn't remember how long he'd laid freezing within it. He needed to get away from it.

He tripped again, only faintly registering the obstacle felt much softer than a rock this time around. Falling down elbows first, he hissed at the contact. Even if his jacket acted like a buffer, it still hurt.

In the moonlight, something moved.

He stilled, his eyes blankly staring at the shadow that stretched over him. Something wiggled from beneath his legs, splashing through water and disappearing from view like a snake. His mind was blank, not really taking anything in, just observing from an out-of-body

experience.

Then there was a piercing noise behind him, like a cricket but much louder. It was hummed, a croon reaching deep into his being, making him shiver for a reason other than the cold. He braced himself and stood back up. He raised his head.

It was blocking the moonlight, whatever it was, casting him in its large shadow. The blurry silhouette was dark, maybe even black, but he couldn't be sure. He couldn't even make out where the stone it was perched on ended and where its actual body began. On top of it, two glowing points observed him.

It would have been an intimidating sight, if he'd been in his right mind.

As it was, only trivial things flew through his mind. Like those eyes. He'd seen them somewhere before, back then.

He blinked slowly.

Cat's eyes? They certainly looked that way.

It was silent for a few moments as they regarded each other. Or rather, it regarded him. The boy just couldn't bring himself to focus on the situation. Every time he grasped a thought it escaped him just as soon. He simply wanted to lie down in his bed and forget all that happened.

The being crooned again, moving with what Shinichi could guess was a downward cock of the head. If that was true, it had a really large head.

The movement was repeated and somehow it came to Shinichi that the being was maybe trying to indicate something. Maybe it wanted him to introduce himself?

He opened his mouth, intent on doing just that, but nothing came out. He'd lost his voice. His mouth clicked shut.

They stared at each other some more. As time wore on indefinitely, the fog in Shinichi's mind started to slowly, slowly clear up. The feeling in his body began returning. There was a pesky fluttering within him, like butterflies in his stomach.

The black shape cocked its head again, this time nearer to him. Instinctively Shinichi took a step back and almost fell over. He shielded his front and waited for an attack to come.

None did.

Instead, he became aware of somethingâ€¦ wiggling under his hand. Furrowing his eyebrows in confusion, he clumsily brought his hand up and reached inside his wet jacketâ€¦ and closed it around something scaly and slippery. It scared him at first and he let it go, but as it started flapping around and beating at his front (so it wasn't a fluttering feeling after all) he reached back and pulled it out, half-afraid of what it might be.

It was a fish.

He should be laughing, but could only stare at it blankly.

Another echoey croon made him look up, only to find the twin glowing orbs focused on the fish in his hand. Still a bit out of his mind, he held it up in an offering.

He wasn't sure if it was because of his foggy mind or something else, but one moment the being was there, glancing at his face, and the next it had a fish in its maw. Another moment, and there was no fish at all.

They stared at each other again.

Then, Shinichi turned around and walked away. Or wobbled. He wasn't sure he could stand properly.

He didn't look back, but he could feel the cat-like eyes watching him long after he reached the forest at the far end of the rocky shore.

* * *

><p>He couldn't recognize where he was. Nothing looked familiar anymore. He could barely even see anything!

By now, Shinichi was past caring about his own bed or the cold or his many injuries hurting. He just wanted out of the forest! No matter how much he walked or wormed his way through tight passages, hoping he'd magically find himself out, there was no end to the trees in sight.

There was no way out.

He'd lost his scarf some way back, as much as it had served him by clinging wetly to his neck, and now he was traveling in just his jacket, his torn gloves, and the rest of his clothes that were utterly useless when wet. His throat burned, his heartbeat rung loud in his ears, he couldn't breathe through his nose and he felt just as dizzy as before.

He walked for an eternity before he finally collapsed, tears falling from his eyes and mouth gasping. Broken whimpers did nothing to make him feel better " it only reminded him that he couldn't scream.

He was lost; utterly and completely lost.

Why, oh _why_ hadn't he listened when he was told not to go off by himself? _Why_ did he have to see that river so much? He tried to blame, to curse himself for going off without any thinking, but he also knew, deep inside, that it would not help him. He'd wanted to have a grand case to solve, his mind told him, and now he got it. The case of a lost boy. Now he just needed to stay alive.

That thought brought him up short.

'_Oh God, am I going to die here?_'

The notion hadn't come to him until then, and suddenly everything seemed so much more _real_, _so much more frightening_, and so much

more _ridiculous_. What will he do? What _could_ he do? He didn't want to _die_!

The child didn't notice, but he was starting to breathe faster and his body was beginning to cramp up from the lack of oxygen. He was hyperventilating, but there was no one to tell him to calm down and say it would all be okay.

He was utterly alone.

A crack of a random twig in the distance brought him out of shock though. The scared child scrambled along the ground until he was curled up against a tree. His bottom was freezing from the wet leaves covering the forest floor. Seeking even a faint bit of comfort in his cold and frightened state, he placed his head between his knees and covered it with his hands, determined not to see anything that wanted to approach.

He was scared, and he wasn't ashamed to admit it.

He stayed like that for a long time, sniffing and crying, until the tears had run dry and his eyes began to drop. He was still shivering violently, but dizziness was starting to overtake him again and he gladly welcomed the feeling. In that state, the outside world somehow didn't matter as much anymore.

* * *

><p>He became faintly aware of leaves quietly rustling to his right, ever so closer as if someone was sneaking up, but he couldn't bring himself to care anymore.<p>

He was just so tired.

When something touched his side, he flinched. However, despite his reaction, it didn't move away. It stayed there, that something, breathing warm puffs of air on his being (or was it sniffing him?), before the rest of it joined and leaned against him. He trembled, but it didn't try to squash him with its weight.

Something blocked the wind from touching him, like a fan reaching out to cocoon him in a protective shell. It became very still.

He only relaxed when a long croon cut through the air, traveled through the body he was leaning against and entered his very bones. Only then did he start drifting off to the steady rise and fall of a chest and the loud beat of a strong heart. Only then did he allow himself to realize that here, in this mysterious embrace, he was warm for the first time of the whole day.

Inside a cold dark forest, all alone and without any way of getting out, surrounded by possible dangers he didn't even dare contemplate in his dreamsâ€|

He fell asleep.

-0-0-

* * *

><p>The next time he woke up, it surprisingly wasn't due to cold. He awoke slowly, floating between that fine line of wakefulness and slumber, his thoughts muddled. The ground beneath him was hard and several somethings were poking him at his sides. It was hard to maintain his sleeping state that way, but stillâ€| that was not what awoke him.<p>

It was a coughing fit.

As soon as he felt it coming, he was sitting upright and practically coughing out his lungs. He took desperate gulps of air that seemed somehow sparse. When it was finally over though, the subsequent dizziness and ache in his airways was almost enough to send back into a forceful sleep.

Instead he fought to stay awake, because his mind, as foggy as it was, still managed to grasp one clear thought.

It was not a dream, and this was not the forest he fell asleep in.

There was a fire crackling merrily a few feet away. The uneven walls and ceiling it illuminated let him know that he was in some kind of cave, which would also explain why it was harder to breathe with all the smoke. A turn of his head revealed a source of light, indicating the entrance just a small distance away.

He stood up, hissing and whimpering at all the aches in his body and carefully holding onto the wall for support. He dragged his feet to the small opening, then shielded his eyes against the light.

'_No,'_ he thought with great disappointment as his eyes finally adjusted. He was on a small rocky uphill, wide enough to house the cave, but lines of trees still filled his vision. _'I'm still in the forest. But maybeâ€|'_

Taking all of these facts in, he felt himself hope for a moment. Had he maybe been brought there by someone? Had they lit the fire so he could get warm? Was there another person there beside him?

Was he saved?

For that one moment, he found enough strength to ignore the pain, the nausea and the constant anxiety accompanying him since the day before. In that one moment, the five-year-old searched the darkness of the cave for his savior with eyes full of hope.

The eyes he met, however, definitely weren't human.

They were cat-like, and big and toxic green, and _definitely not human_. They glinted in the light of the fire, peering at him from the darkness. The slits in them (so _cat-like_) contracted, and when they moved and a large dark body began to follow them into the light, Shinichi did the only thing he could.

It was large, it was black, it had claws that scraped the stone and it was coming at him.

And so, since he couldn't scream "BEAR!" to the worldâ€|

He ran.

* * *

><p>-0-0-0-0-0-_

_Nyahahahaha, a bear! xD

>_

Much angst in here, but that's to be expected. They meet finally! ... but it's a bit anti-climatic. And not even really important, as you'll soon see. I sincerely doubt Shinichi will even remember most of this night...

_Oh yeah, the last line-break marks the end of my original chapter 'Lost' (which is why it's a bit different than others) and begins with 'Encounter' that was cut up into several more chapters cuz of its length. And... that's all I wanted to say :)

>

6. Big Black Bear

_Thank you for the reviews and faves and alerts, and please just keep them coming if you can! :D

>Anyway, we have the fateful meeting chapter here, so read~!
_

**Warnings:** child!fic, wannabe-serious!fic, angst, animal death in this chapter

>Words: 2354__

>

* * *

><p>Chapter 5: **_Big Black Bear__

>

* * *

><p>He ran like there was no tomorrow.<p>

He jumped over the steep rocky terrain that surrounded the cave, all the while fighting to keep his legs from collapsing. He ignored the many scrapes he'd likely get from his stunt, jumped once more until he crouched and felt cold wet leaves under his handsâ€| and then he ran some more.

His lungs burned, his vision was swimming, but the only thing he could concentrate on was the sound of crumbling rocks behind him, because that meant _he was being chased._

'_BEAR!_' his mind helpfully supplied.

Of course this revelation did nothing to alleviate his panic and absolute disbelief at the situation, but it was the only option available. It must have been the bear everyone was talking about that first evening at the hotel.

Shinichi remembered how he'd once asked Miss Edel what kinds of big

animals lived in Scotland (maybe lions or tigers, or wolves or dragons?), but she quickly made him discard all those silly theories. Apparently, in Scotland, you can only be attacked by territorial deer or rabid foxes and wildcats. Bears have been extinct for a very long time, according to her.

Well apparently, taking into consideration what Shinichi had just seen, she had been very, oh so very VERY wrong about that.

He didn't know how long he'd been running, but the next time he checked there were no more sounds of pursuit behind him. A look over his shoulder revealed only lines of trees and bushes. There was no one there.

Despite that he pushed his legs forward faster and faster " he didn't want to risk the bear catching up and having him for lunch. At one point his breathing was so shallow he almost found it easier to not breathe at all, but then the world around him suddenly shifted and he was falling over a large tree root that had mysteriously found its way under his legs.

The impact with earth was a painful one, which he proved as such with a loud broken-off shriek, courtesy of his vocal chords being unable to take the strain. Once he realized he'd fallen down, he also found out that he couldn't get the strength to stand back up. His right leg was in agony.

At some point he'd started crying again, he didn't know when. He stayed on the ground, panting and heart beating furiously, wide-eyed and sniffing and so freaking irritated because his nose was stuffed and he was hungry and thirsty and he just wanted to go home_.

However, he also knew that he had to keep going. If he stayed in one place for too long the bear could find him again, and he didn't want to contemplate how that would turn out. He had to keep moving.

Even with that notion in mind, it took some time before he could climb back to his feet. He only managed a step before pain shot up his right leg and he collapsed again.

He was spent. He just couldn't find the strength anymore.

He was just a kid.

It was only then that he seemed to notice he was shivering. Despite spending the night by fire, his clothes were still wet. He tried wounding his jacket tighter around himself, but it hardly helped as it was ice cold in and off itself.

'_Great,'_ Shinichi thought. He'd say he was almost past caring now, if it only weren't for the pain that constantly served as a reminder of the seriousness of the situation.

In the end he laid on the ground for an indefinite amount of time, deciding rest was better than futile attempts at running on nothing but willpower. He cautiously listened to his surroundings during the whole time, ready to bolt at the slightest sound of an animal approaching. Nothing came however, and he slowly started to

relax.

When he felt strong enough again, he grabbed a thick branch lying next to him, probably fallen from a tree some time ago, and stood back up. Immediately he could tell that the egregious pain in his leg hadn't been imagined and that he'd probably done something serious to it, like spraining it. He remembered how his mom had once had the same injury " she had to stay home resting or walk around on crutches for a week.

And now he seemingly had it. He shed a few tears at this revelation, but then put it away to worry about later. For now, he just had to continue moving. Later, he promised himself, when he found his parents, he would rest that leg twice as long.

A good part of the daylight was spent exactly that way " moving. He'd walk as far as he could go, and when he couldn't, he'd rest until he felt up to it again. Shinichi tried to ignore his growling stomach, his parched throat and the many stings, particularly in his leg, but it was hard. He wasn't accustomed to his needs being ignored, as he was a five-year-old with a regular predetermined schedule of five meals a day, water in any nearby pipe and dry clothes piled up in his wardrobe, but knowing he didn't have those things made him feel bad he took them for granted.

Meanwhile, the landscape around him had hardly changed. Trees still filled his vision wherever he went, but the sound of the river had long since faded away. In addition to rivers, he was really beginning to hate forests as well.

As time wore on and movements started to grow repetitive in nature (one step, two steps, grit your teeth, keep walking), a cloud of indifference had slowly started creeping over his mind. Soon he wasn't overthinking things anymore, wasn't wondering and panicking about each and every sound of a leaf rustling " just watching the next step forwards, hopefully one that would show him a way out of the place. Insignificant things like his own sorry state had ceased to matter at the moment, leaving only blessed numbness in its wake.

He didn't know how long he had wandered in that state, but it was over the moment he heard a thump resound directly behind him.

And another. And another.

The calmness that had enshrouded him instantly dissipated, bringing back that (quickly becoming familiar) feeling of a quickened pulse and short breaths. For a moment he feared the bear had finally caught up to him, that he would have to run again and most likely not get that far with his hurt leg. However, with the next thumping sound he finally noticed the glaring differences in the steps. The bear had made soft sounds, unusual for such a big-bodied animal and accompanied by scrapes of claws, while these ones were more distinct, more compact.

More like hooves than paws.

When he turned around, it wasn't a bear that he spotted a few feet away. Seeing a deer instead of a big black mass almost had him sagging in pure relief. He wasn't going to end up as bear food! And

if the deer was there, it could also mean that the ground he was walking on felt safe enough for other prey to freely wander without fear of any predators.

Just to be sure, he took a look around for good measure. No bears in sight.

For the first time since he'd gotten into this mess, Shinichi felt like laughing in relief. It came out more as a pained gasp, but he could care less. Maybe he wasn't out of the woods yet (figuratively _and_ literally), maybe he had yet to return to his parents and maybe he was _still_ exhausted and starving from hunger, but at least he wasn't in danger of becoming dinner anymore.

Struck by a childish urge, he decided he should thank the wonderful deer for its help. A simple whispered 'thank you' would have done the job.

Upon turning around however, he wasn't sure it would be appropriate anymore.

The fully grown reddish-coated deer hadn't moved an inch from its spot, but its large antlers were now pointed in his direction. Behind the impressive appendages (and fear-inducing, if you were in the boy's current position), the animal's steely gaze never wavered from his small form. The words died on Shinichi's lips before they could even be uttered.

The deer scratched its hoof on the ground. He tensed.

For a moment, they stood still.

Then it roared and lunged forwards, perfectly substituting for Shinichi's broken-off scream as he dove to the side.

The antlers just barely missed him as he scrambled back along the forest floor. The branch he'd used as a crutch cracked loudly under the animal's hoofs, making Shinichi realize he wouldn't be getting out of there anytime soon, especially not with a hurt leg.

His back met a fallen tree bark just as the deer righted itself for a new tackle. Watching those antlers being waved around made his blood run cold and caused survival instincts to kick in. Without thinking he sprang up (as far as he could on only one foot) and rolled over the tree bark. He landed just in time to feel the vibration of the loud _thud_ on the other side.

Air coming in quick gulps, the boy stared straight ahead in horrified wonderment, having risen up into a sitting position to lean against the bark. His whole frame shook. His hands balled into tight fists, wet leaves and dirt within them unnoticed. He felt glued to the spot, unable to move for the life of him.

They say in panic you had an overload of scrambled thoughts. At the moment, it depicted him perfectly. A look into his mind wouldn't make any sense at the moment.

'_That was too close- it could have been me- oh God is it dead- why can't I- move move MOVE?_'_

He desperately wanted to check on the possibly injured animal, or to run away and never look back, to stay there and drown in misery until his parents found him, to do something at a time like this, but his body just wouldn't listen. In the end he stayed there a little longer, trying to gather his wits again. Then, just as he thought he had retrieved some semblance of control over his bodyâ€|

Something scraped against the other side of the bark.

It started with the sound of unsteady hooves, followed by a quiet roar and short blessed silence, then the passage of a dark shadow over his head, which ended with a graceful landing and the sight of that deer again just a few feet away from him. Not even holding his breath could prevent the beast from spotting him hunched against the bark behind it.

Slowly it turned around in his direction, steps unsteady.

Somehow Shinichi expected his life to flash before his eyes at that moment, but nothing of the sort happened. The only thing he could see was that stony gaze and the huge antlers, still like a sculpture. Then, when it gave out a final roar, Shinichi wished he could close his eyes so he wouldn't have to watch it rush at him like death incarnated.

However, had he closed his eyes, he would have missed the falter in the rushing steps when they were already halfway to its target. He would have missed the slight widening of the black beady eyes, and probably, most absolutely, he would have missed the reflection of a dark shape in those same eyes as they fixed themselves upon a spot far above him.

That one moment in time froze just enough for Shinichi to take note of all these things.

One moment, and then time resumed itself in an inhuman screech that was unlike anything Shinichi had ever heard. The hairs on the back of his neck rose as the deer's body was suddenly thrown backwards under an onslaught of weight. The animal's roar abruptly cut off, and Shinichi could clearly see the reason as sharp teeth latched onto a strong neck right in front of his horror-filled eyes.

The deer fought to throw its attacker off. It kicked and pushed, sending leaves and dirt in all directions, but the teeth held firm and black limbs kept it in check until finally, with one last spasm, it fell completely still.

A huge maw detached itself almost gently from the now dead animal, a tongue briefly darting out to lick the accumulated blood there. The large body rose slowly, as if not to scare anyone, and then the head turned to pierce him with inhuman toxic-green eyes.

Just like in that cave.

Shinichi was moving before he even became aware of the fact. It didn't matter how, be it hands or sprained legs or on all four at the same time, the only thing he could see was a tunnel vision to safety, away from the beast. Away from the bear of his nightmares, because it didn't look like a bear at all (since when did bears have scales, and long limbs and tails?).

His ears were still ringing from the screeching, his body only faintly feeling the consequences of crawling on a forest floor. His mind was utterly blank.

He passed by something metallic, not even deigning to glance at it in his stupor.

Noises behind him indicated the bear- the _creature_ had finally disentangled itself from its- its _prey_ and was now coming _right at him_, but he kept moving without turning back once. When the air was unexpectedly pierced with an ear-splitting screech and followed by a loud crash, he only barely flinched at the vibrations of the earth.

He kept his pace. He never looked back.

At some point his limbs gave out in exhaustion (or he miss-stepped or he broke something again, he _didn't know_). He collapsed on the ground, his breathing too quick for a proper intake of oxygen. Then, with the pained screams still permeating the air and chilling him to the bones, his wide eyes rolled upwards in a clear show of losing consciousness.

He gladly welcomed it.

* * *

><p>So, Shin-chan finally meets Tooth... and it isn't pretty.

I think the animal death in this chapter is the peak of angst, from here on out we have a bit more angsting by Shinichi and then the friendship part can begin. Not much else to say.

Oh yeah... schoolwork's killing me. I mean, for Wednesday I've got at least 150 grammar exercises to do, and I haven't even started! Dx I've been writing ch.8 on and off for a month, and still I'm barely past half, AND I need to stick in a Toothless Interlude between ch.7&8, AND read a book and study and... *starts sobbing* Point is, after ch.7 I may start delaying updates. HOWEVER, I'm writing this. I will write this to the end. I shall not abandon this or put it on hiatus... just have late updates.

That's all. Thanks for your support.

End
file.